Chapter 8

Summary, conclusions and recommendations

The dissertation presented the language problems of the Limpopo Province, which has inherited some historically determined tensions from its past. Language has always been a central issue in the country with events like the 1976 riots being a good example. .

Language was used to identify people and to define racial groups, and by so doing strengthening the apartheid system of government. It was also used as an instrument to provide access to certain privileges, as English is used today to retain privileges, and this was discriminatory. English and Afrikaans were the official languages even though the majority of the African speaking people did not have adequate knowledge of the two languages. Inter-group communication has always been difficult in the two languages and relatively few white and coloured people of South Africa know any of the African languages. Bilingualism was preferred to multilingualism, with bilingualism implying knowledge only of English and Afrikaans.

The indigenous languages like Northern Sotho, Xitsonga, Tshivenda, and Northern Ndebele of the Province are not fully developed as funds were only available for their terminological development and standardisation. Little has been done to render these languages adequate to serve most or all social functions. Some languages like Afrikaans in the Province have acquired some socio-political attachments as it is stigmatised as a language of oppression by most black citizens in the Limpopo Province . English is seen by most of them as a language of liberation. The autochthonous languages are seen by some as low status varieties with no meaning in public life.

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Some language-related issues like mother-tongue instruction, have been politicised and most black parents prefer English medium schools for their children despite teachers' limited competence in English. If people cannot speak to one another, they cannot develop into a nation or as individuals.

The Province has a diverse distribution of home languages most of which are Bantu languages. The homeland system had an influence on the present language situation of numerous languages with a conflict potential.

Afrikaans competes with English as working official languages. Black people struggle to speak these languages as their languages are not used in economic and political activities and also because of the negative self-esteem these people have about their language. They are also not accorded parity of esteem and equitable treatment as demanded in the 1996 Constitution.

Reference was made to the role of missionaries with regard to language. They spread a knowledge of English among black people and reduced the indigenous languages to writing. They taught these languages even in non-religious contexts. British colonial rule preferred basic schooling in the relevant indigenous languages and promoted English medium instruction long before 1910. The apartheid language policies strengthened ethnic divisions and resulted in the division of the black people into a large number of conflicting and competing ethnic groups.

The present language policy does not state explicitly which language should be used by who in which situations. Cases of language conflicts at schools have been cited. The problem of immigrants and the language problem they pose, can be addressed if, in

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formulating policy, one takes into considerations the politics, culture, geography and the socio-economic conditions found in a particular area. The main challenge is to work towards policies that guarantee multilingualism as enshrined in the Constitution.

Structures like PanSALB and NGO's like the Committee of Marginalised Languages are expected to defend the Constitution actively and advance a progressive, inclusive approach to language policy to benefit everyone. Language planning must promote tolerance of diversity and property by using linguistic resources effectively. The effects of the dominance of English may endanger social transformation and the development of other languages.

The Province also has language-related developmental problems. One of them is the inadequate development of its human resources, in which language plays a fundamental role. The educational development of most individuals in the Province is below the expected potential.

Although there is a Committee of Marginalised Languages, the major problem of the speakers of most marginalised African languages is the negative self-esteem they have and the fact that they underestimate the instructional value that their languages have. Revalorisation of these languages is recommended. The Province also displays a shortage of language practitioners to meet the needs of the new situation.

The dissertation needed a theoretical framework for the study of language-related conflicts and conflict resolution, a comprehensive language policy and an associated language plan as well as strategies for the implementation of the plan. Language policy for the Province should be informed by the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and the RDP

policies of the country.

The dissertation aimed to show how language policies can help to bring about social transformation and ultimately help in building a nation, mainly through the use of African languages in education. It also aimed at showing how language planning can promote socio-political unity or common loyalty. Multilingualism is recommended to facilitate communication within the Province. The other aim is to support the revalorisation of the indigenous languages and their adaptation to present-day needs. Linguistic and cultural diversity should be positively recognised.

I discussed the theoretical framework of social transformation explaining the systems model and the dynamic social field model of transformation.

Language planning is viewed in itself as an instrument of social change in support of Cooper (1989). All strategies of social transformation need to be transmitted in the most appropriate language. Language planning should contribute to both continuity and change, not only in the language, but also in other social institutions. It promotes new functional allocations of language varieties and structural changes in those varieties as well as the acquisition of these varieties by new populations. Language planning strengthens the individual's dignity, self-worth, social connectedness and meaning as a member of a group. It is a necessary condition for economic development. People with well-defined communicative means acquire the economic power. Language planning can be a pursuit of power by those in authority.

It is divided into corpus, status and acquisition planning. It is carried out for the attainment of a number of non-linguistic ends. The problem to be solved is usually not

a problem in isolation within the region but is associated directly with the politics, economic, scientific, social, cultural and/or religious situation. (Cooper 1989. 88). It may not be directed only towards aggregates at national or state level, but also at smaller aggregates like the ethnic, religious, occupational and racial communities.

Language planning includes language education planning which focuses specifically on the language of learning and instruction for both the formal and the non-formal systems of education.

A number of factors influence language planning, Appel and Muysken (1987) identified the socio-demographic, linguistic, socio-psychological, political and religious factors. Vernacular language education was discussed as initially proposed by UNESCO in 1951, which emphasises the importance of introducing learners to education via the mother-tongue as the language that learners can effectively use.

The study also looked at language-based conflicts in comparable countries, Nigeria, Kenya and Tanzania and explained the implications of these experiences for the Limpopo Province.

Individuals are attached to their nations sentimentally and instrumentally. I explained that instrumental attachments must be improved before creating a strong sentimental attachment. A peaceful political atmosphere is a priority because only when there is political stability can language planning be given serious objective consideration.

Most African states continued the colonial policy with regard to languages of education. Language policies have been explained as almost always political decisions as most

colonial language policies reflected the political philosophies of the colonial powers. Policies exemplified in Chapter 3 are examples of a rapid Europianisation of the media of education. The use of mother-tongue in education has been gradually phased out. Considerations that dictated the present language policies of African states vis-à-vis education are efficiency and expediency, national unity and national progress or development. Bokamba and Tlou (1977) indicated some disadvantages of colonial language policies.

Case studies were quoted from Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya and South Africa looking at the relationship between school outcomes and language acquisition. The overall conclusion on the above is that bilingual programmes that shift the LoL/T from mother-tongue to L2 before the learner reaches a certain age or level of cognition may fail.

One may learn that policy needs clarity of objectives in a policy statement from the Tanzanian case. From the Kenyan case one learns that vagueness in a policy gives room for loose interpretations. From Tanzania one realizes the importance of social marketing campaigns to precede a language policy support and adoption by all stakeholders.

I also touched on characteristics of language policies in Africa some of which, according to Bamgbose (1991) are avoidance, vagueness, arbitrariness, fluctuations and declaration without implementation. The three exemplified countries are critically discussed in relation to the above characteristics.

Implications for the Limpopo Province include the fact that its language policy should be explicitly stated and have a comprehensive plan for implementation. The role(s) played

by each language should be defined (mostly official languages) and the non-official languages should be provided for somewhere in the policy. It must state exactly what should happen to them. The position of the non-indigenous languages like English must be clear and well motivated.

The sociolinguistic history of the Limpopo Province looked at the first six languages selected in terms of their number of speakers. Northern Sotho, Xitsonga, Tshivenda, Setswana, Afrikaans and English were discussed and their historical background in the province, their development and the social positions given to them, were provided. This information is useful in evaluating the language situation and suggesting possible alternative policies for the revalorisation of some of these languages.

I provided the socio-political history of the African languages prevalent in the province and commented about their standardisation and social uses.

The history of the Afrikaans language was traced from 1652, through to the Free Burghers and the Great Trek in 1836 when Afrikaans was used as the written and cultural language. Afrikaans became an official language in 1925. The National Party declared Afrikaans as medium of instruction in schools. Resistance to this practice intensified and lead to the 1976 riots and to the stigmatisation of the language and its association with apartheid by most Blacks.

English is a prestigious dominant language in the country generally even though there are varieties like the Natal English, Eastern Cape English, Afrikaans-English, Indian English and African English. Most black people prefer English over Afrikaans.

None of the African languages discussed is homogeneous since each comprises a number of dialects. There is a diglossic situation at Ga-Mashashane in the Province where Northern Ndebele and Northern Sotho are used. Both Xitsonga and Tshivenda have influences from Northern Sotho mostly in their written forms. Their speakers are able to speak and/or understand Northern Sotho. The Northern Sotho speakers are dominant statistically and are evenly distributed through the Province and this allows regular intercourse between speakers of these languages. Afrikaans is presented as an African language and a second language to most African language speakers.

Chapter 5 provided a socio-political characterisation of the language situation in the Province. It is not easy to count languages as the distinction between language and dialect is not clear. The politics of the country also make the task of the language counter even more difficult and most of the information given may be seen to be biassed. The Province houses the Germanic and the 'Bantu' families of languages.

Concerning language functions, English and Afrikaans are still in more use in government circles with English becoming very dominant. The African languages still have little real meaning. English commands very high status. Afrikaans is viewed by its L1 speakers as having the same instrumental value as English. Moreover, it embodies the Afrikaner's socio-cultural identity. African language have a very low public status and are used for low-function communication purposes mostly.

The African languages lack Western technological and scientific vocabulary. The Province has not yet decided on which languages to use as official languages for provincial use.

For educational purposes, all the official languages in the province are at least

adequately equipped to be used as media of instruction at primary school level.

In the judiciary, English and Afrikaans are still the major languages in the formulation of laws and in the courts of law. Interpreters interpret from English and Afrikaans into the African languages and vise versa.

With regard to language planning institutions, Act 108 of 1996,- the Constitution-provides for 11 official languages at national level, and Act 59 of 1995 made provision for the establishment of PanSALB. Item 8 (8) (a) and (b) of the same Act provided for the creation of provincial language committees. The Limpopo Province then established the LPLC as discussed in Chapter 5 of this study. Beside this there is a Committee for Marginalised Languages in the province.

The provincial government must give directives as to how individuals, groups and communities relate to capital in particular and resources in general. This Province must cater specifically for its black population, the workers, the middle strata, small business, the rural poor, and all who have been denied opportunities by the Apartheid government.

Formal education is described as one decisive factor for social transformation as it may allow citizens to acquire knowledge and skills to overcome the economic and technical backlogs effectively. For the Province, language in education has to deal with the role of the indigenous languages and proficiency in the non-indigenous languages. There is a need to know more than one language for inter-ethnic communication. Schools should develop the pupil's affective skills through development of positive attitudes to work and study, loyalty to their country and tolerance for people who may differ from them. This together with social skills require a great deal of understanding which can best be done

in a mother-tongue.

My argument for the use of African languages as LoL/T is based on the UNESCO committee recommendation to use mother-tongue, where mother-tongue is a vernacular. Once cognition is developed through the mother-tongue it also provides a rich cognitive preparation for the acquisition of a second language and other subjects of study. The use of L1 for the introduction of education to learners is recommended as it prepares the learner even for education in general in areas like vocational training, and for the second language, third or other languages for inter-ethnic and /or international communication. This is strongly recommended.

Since mother-tongue education lays a strong base on which to base education through non-indigenous languages, I recommend that the period for mother-tongue instruction should be increased. Teachers should be encouraged to retrain in the teaching of African languages. These languages should be used to teach school subjects and be taught themselves up to higher learning institutions to enable people to do research into these languages. I hinted that the province need more balanced people, i.e. educationally and culturally, and this is fully covered in the outline I made of the goals of learning the African languages.

In outlining the realities of L2 teaching in the Province, I showed that they do not allow learners adequate acquisition for various reasons. Teachers for these languages also have a limited proficiency in the languages. Besides, there is scarcity of physical resources in many schools. Education is extremely difficult as a result.

I included the issue of fluency and accuracy to show what the objective of L2 teaching

should be in the context of the Limpopo Province. I then touched on education and teacher training in the RDP document which aims at developing human resources, since teachers play a significant role in ensuring that people are able to realize their full potential. It further recommends a single integrated system of education that provides equal opportunities to all indiscriminately. Stress is laid on co-ordinating formal and non-formal education which will also allow learners to obtain recognition and credits for qualifications and credits towards qualifications from one part of the system to another. (RDP, par. 3.3.7. p.62)

I argued for the system of recurrent education that encourages a lifelong concern for the integration of work and study wherein adult education becomes an important component of the system. Education, training and other forms of planned formal and non-formal learning should be interspersed with work throughout life.

Adult basic education should involve employers, trade unions and all levels of government. Adult education should provide change as Nyerere (1978) put it. I emphasised the link between adult education and social transformation. It is mostly important in health, literacy and community development movements where indigenous languages are recommended for use.

Since education was been identified as a priority by the ministry of education in the year 2000 for his five-year term, the country is committed to improving public education. Distance education is recommended as another alternative for improving teaching standards without removing teachers from their schools. The outcomes based education should be contextualised to suit local conditions.

Chapter 7 argues that the Province must have a comprehensive language policy and language plan. For the province linguistic diversity and multilingualism should be preferred over monolingual policies. The policy can not be developed in isolation but in line with the RDP, the vision of the LPLC, and the larger national framework.

The ideals, set by the national government and the provinces, are supposed to be carried out by respective provincial governments with monetary allocations from the national and provincial coffers. Communities are allowed to practice their own culture and affirmative action is to be implemented.

The RDP has been described as a strategy for the development of the country's human, natural and financial resources aimed at, inter alia, creating employment opportunities and breaking down social barriers.

The Constitution implies that it is the duty of the provincial governments to elevate the status and advance the use of the official languages. PanSALB promotes and creates conditions for this development. The Bill of Rights has been outlined with self determination on cultural and linguistic grounds.

The study argues that languages should be seen as resources which can be used to promote productivity, efficiency and effectivity in any institution. Multilingualism is not seen as a problem, but as a resource one can use for the betterment of living conditions. Language promotion can occur only if the languages concerned acquire some economic and educational value. The view I take is that a multilingual citizen is an ideal citizen of the Province. Multilingualism should then be the cornerstone of language policy in my context. This touches on the democratic principle of effective participation of citizens in

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their administrative affairs. A multilingual language policy has democratising consequences.

I adopted Bokamba's (1999) view that the adoption of a particular language policy vis-à-vis education and government (administration) is viewed as the allocation of a critical resource to the fundamental process of national or provincial development. Such a policy is theoretically regarded as a major contribution to educational, political, economic and socio-cultural development/transformation. The African languages are necessary investments. I have mentioned that the need to promote African languages is not intended to negate the complementary useful roles that non-indigenous languages have played in the past and to date. In my view citizens of the Province should be equipped with the communicative competence necessary to make them citizens of the world as well. They must also have access to a means of global communication, which will obviously be a non-indigenous language.

It is clearly put that the case of Afrikaans demonstrates that any language can rise to the occasion as an official language and political will is a necessary ingredient in the transformation of a language from a state of inadequacy to a state of adequacy as an official language if the transformation is followed by an unfailing commitment and sustained practical support in the form of continuous provision of funds and other resources to ensure the modernisation of the language(s) in question. I recommend that specific languages be selected for specific functions.

The elevation of a language to serve as official or government working language accords empowerment to its speakers, especially L1 speakers. I recommend the adoption of a calculated multilingual policy that allocates different functions to the selected languages

and thereby allows a wider access to the resources and opportunities to the interested and capable citizens.

I have shown that the fact that monolingual policies foster unity is unsupported by facts, but the modernization of African languages to enable them to function effectively as media of administration and education require a long term and heavy investment of resources. The evolution of English and Afrikaans is illustrative in this regard. I see development as also encompassing political, cultural and social factors which may, of course, be facilitated by educational, scientific and economic developments even though not necessarily entailed by them. Some languages may therefore be used for political, cultural and social development mainly.

I recommend a place for the selected African languages and a language of wider communication. The policy I recommend should encourage the mobilisation of the African languages and cultures, and not destroy them or create linguistic and cultural alienation. Linguistic diversity should be promoted. I have outlined principles on which my policy is based and stated that the policy is for the provincial and local governments of the Limpopo Province including as well the private sectors operating within the province. The recommended policy puts the five major official languages of the Province on a par with one another but with English/Afrikaans and Northern Sotho being official provincial languages for the first two years and then Xitsonga and Tshivenda also following. I further recommended that in the mean time, Xitsonga and Tshivenda be used in designated districts in the place of Northern Sotho as local conditions may dictate in cases where such languages are in the majority. I then suggested a plan of implementing the policy.

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I have shown that language planning formulations should take into account local conditions and needs. Additive multilingualism is one way of incorporating various needs on different levels of society. I recommend that compromises be made at local government level in cases where a minority language community has to take up a local dominant language. I agree that some languages will naturally shift, some may change and even die by themselves or be killed by others, but in formulating a policy one should not opt for a wholesale death of any language in favour of an exclusionary policy.

I have explained that policies are instruments of government and that any input from the grassroots depends on how willing, and how obliged, a government is to listen and respond.

Various language planning aspects have not been treated in the required detail because the empirical sociolinguistic research on the Province is not available. I have not done research on the use of African languages specifically for vocational training. Such research may illustrate that if skills are mastered in one's mother-tongue, the rewards may be maximised better than when skills are learned through a second, third or other language of instruction. I therefore recommend that research be pursued on the effectiveness of using African languages in vocational training as well as the use of African languages in economic activities in the province.

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